

Conference Paper

Training as an Activity for Optimizing Emotional and Personality Well-being

Larisa Karapetyan and Olga Zotova

¹Ural Federal University named after the first President of Russia B. N. Yeltsin, Yekaterinburg, Russia

²University for Humanities, Yekaterinburg, Russia

Abstract

Emotional and personality wellbeing (EPW) represents a complex system capturing a great number of elements, subjects, and objects that differ in a qualitative diversity of internal bonds and complexity of system–structural relationships with other systems and social milieu. This training aimed at optimizing emotional and personality wellbeing including a psychological impact on various components of the respondents' implicit perceptions about their wellbeing, the individual's awareness of wellbeing factors, their own limitations, adaptive resources, ability to reconstruct notional sphere and a constructive fashion of behavior. Extreme conditions of the activity predetermine most destructive effects on emotional and personal wellbeing. In light of this, the authors introduce the training program in the group of rescuers whose job involves a great number of physical and psychological risks. The training incorporates 5 four-hour thematic blocks and implies the use of such techniques as reflexive self-analysis and focusing, active visualization, techniques aimed at semantic processes' facilitating, positive reinterpretation, as well as elements of bodily therapy, action-based and gaming techniques, coaching, sand therapy. The effectiveness of the training offered was confirmed upon applying the Wilcoxon criterion that showed the validity of differences in SEPW (Self-evaluation of Emotional and Personality Wellbeing) indicators before and after the training: positive indicators have become significantly higher, negative – significantly lower; difference between mean values of integrated EPW indicators and mean value of EPW index have grown significantly. Thus, the training effectiveness was confirmed due to increased awareness of EPW self-evaluation and a wider repertoire of techniques providing normalization of actual psycho-emotional state. The authors underline that the developed training scenario can be used in any vocational group with the account of specific character of its members' activities.

Keywords: emotional and personality wellbeing, self-evaluation, optimization, training

Corresponding Author:

Larisa Karapetyan
karapetyanl@mail.ru

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1. Introduction

For defining optimal and non-optimal development of any system and, in particular, emotional and personality wellbeing integration of different approaches determining meanings and knowledge of optimality is important. Moreover, the specific character of optimal approach to the phenomenon of wellbeing embraces rational and sense-emotional aspects.

Emotional and personality wellbeing (EPW) represents a complex system capturing a great number of elements, subjects, and objects that differ in a qualitative diversity of internal bonds and complexity of system-structural relationships with other systems and social milieu. Organic social systems are dynamic. Consequently, non-stop social processes and functional changes of elements, parts of systems and relationships between them are taking place, and the system gradually shifts from one quality state to another. That is why an array of elements self-organizes and begins to act as a unified whole. 'An important quality of any system is emergency – availability of such specific features which are intrinsic to the system as a whole but not to its separate elements <...> The emergence of optimality is embodiment of such systems' ([8], pp. 19–20).

The problem of impact is special for the science of psychology since it focuses on principal issues associated with psychic phenomena management. It is in problems of psychological effects as nowhere else that the link between enquiries and requirements of today social demand, social practice and the needs of the development of psychology as a science is so pronounced ([3], p. 41). G. M. Andreeva argues that one essential task of social psychology is enhancement of relationships' optimization [1]. It is necessary to direct efforts toward evolvement of such relationships between people when personal choice of everyone is optimal with regard to both community (group) needs and the individual ones. In L. A. Petrovskaya view, refined approaches to socio-psychological training are properly oriented – they deal with effects on group development through optimizing forms of interpersonal relationships ([6], p. 98).

Considering group work advantages K. Rudestam stressed that group experience counteracts alienation, assists in settling interpersonal problems; any group reflects a society in miniature, brings to light such hidden factors as partners' pressure, social influence and conformism; possibility of feedback and support from people with similar problems; within the group a person can learn new skills, do experiments with different styles of relationships with peers; within the group participants can identify themselves with others, 'play' the role of another person for better understanding of

him and themselves and for familiarizing themselves with novel effective behavior patterns of others; group interaction creates tension which helps clarify psychological problems of every member; the group eases the processes of self-realization, self-examination and self-cognition; group form is more advantageous in economic terms: group training is cheaper than individual therapy (moreover, group training becomes more effective for many clients) [9].

The whole range of every person's perception about how he/she gets to know other people is, naturally, of hypothetical character, although indirectly and partially they are tested in the course of everyday communication and joint activities. In a training group the participant acquires a rare opportunity to immediately juxtapose and relate his vision of group members within this group context to the way others see him. 'In social psychology where there is no possibility to check the exact perception of another person by direct comparison of objective methods' data the given comparison is a significant way to verify accuracy of cognition, its specifics' ([7], p. 477). 'Through others we become ourselves... – L. S. Vygotsky wrote. –The individual becomes for himself what he internally is through what he demonstrates to others' ([11]. P. 144). The individual cannot see his own personal manifestations by looking into himself, but rather by examining others revealing effects he produces on them, which is classically described in the theory of 'looking glass self' by Ch. Cooley. This principle concept lays the methodical groundwork for socio-psychological training.

EPW is an existential experience of harmony between inward and outward world occurring in the course of human life, activity and communication.

This training aimed at optimizing emotional and personality wellbeing includes a psychological impact on various components of the respondents' implicit perceptions about their wellbeing, the individual's awareness of wellbeing factors, their own limitations, adaptive resources, ability to reconstruct notional sphere and a constructive fashion of behavior. Subjective well-being comprises both cognitive and emotional components. Interrelations between these two components attest that satisfaction at cognitive level is accompanied by sensing emotional well-being ([12], p. 161).

Reflection should be treated as a mechanism of EPW optimization triggered throughout training since the reflexive analysis of personal wellbeing' factors allows the person not only to simply foresee his actions but also to arbitrarily organize them, fix goals and analyze them in terms of their significance and achievement possibility, to create new ways of activity realization, that is, to master the process of vocational activity management.

Theoretical foundations for the use of reflection in optimizing EPW were provided in the research works of scholars describing reflection as a pervasive personality structure that defines and organizes the wholeness and unity of human life's activity (K. A. Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, B. G. Anan'ev, L. I. Antsyferova, A. A. Bodalyov, A. V. Brushlinsky, A. Busemann, F. E. Vasilyuk, L. S. Vygotsky, G. Hegel, A. S. Datsyuk, A. Z. Zak, E. V. Il'enkov, A. N. Laktionov, V. A. Lefebvre, S. L. Rubinstein, I. N. Semyonov, A. I. Subbotin, J. Flaver, G. P. Schedrivitsky). Reflection as a complex multi-functional mechanism determines awareness, reinterpretation and adjustment of the person's systemic perceptions of himself and his life's activity [5]. During the training the participants critically evaluate and re-evaluate their life's activity stereotypes and their overcoming, the formation of cognitive, emotional (affective), regulatory and behavioral components of EPW by creating reflexive environment and actualizing reflexive self-examination. Such personality transformation is constructive since new content of EPW components is built without destructing psychological structures (like in real life situations when notional sphere is reconstructed through sufferings and acceptance of psycho-traumatic experience) and participants' values, meanings, attitudes, experience and psychological resources serve as the foundation.

2. Methodology

The sampling consisted of:

1. 2229 participants (at the stages of SEPW technique' design and testing). The respondents' age varied from 18 to 65, they represented social groups of the Russian society identified by gender, age, occupation, education and place of residence,
2. 1735 participants at the stage of development and testing of separate elements of training, and
3. 55 subjects during the training (rescuers from Yekaterinburg and the Sverdlovsk region, males aged 20–50).

Prior to the study and after the formative experiment (the training implementation) we used:

1. Self-examination of emotional and personality wellbeing technique (SEPW) by G. A. Glotova and L. V. Karapetyan [2]. According to the instructions the respondents were asked to assess themselves at the moment of testing ('I'-now) using 7-point

scale. The test has nine items singled out in the course of preliminary experiment and literature analysis: three positive items of 'emotional' component of well-being (A) ('happy', 'lucky', 'optimist'); three positive items of 'personality' component of wellbeing (B) ('successful', 'competent', 'reliable') and three negative items of ill-being components (C) which lower general level of emotional and personality wellbeing ('pessimist', 'unhappy', 'envious'). In addition to separate mono scales assessment summarized scores of each of the three components were calculated: A – 'emotional wellbeing' indicator; B – 'personality wellbeing' indicator; C – ill-being indicator; (A+B) – additive indicator of 'emotional' and 'personality' wellbeing; (A – B) – difference between indicators of 'emotional' and 'personality' wellbeing (allows for revealing the proportion of 'emotional' and 'personality' wellbeing pronouncement and estimating its value); (A + B – C) – emotional and personality wellbeing index (total estimate of overall positive and negative items).

2. 'Resilience Test' by D. A. Leont'ev [4].

The realization of this training program implied the use of the following methods: reflexive self-analysis and focusing, active visualization, techniques aimed at semantic processes' facilitating, positive reinterpretation, as well as elements of bodily therapy, action-based and gaming techniques, coaching, and sand therapy.

Target audience: a group of professional (12–20 participants).

Training duration: 20 hours (5 four-hour thematic blocks)

Training Structure:

1. Emotional and personality aspects (general aspects).
2. Emotional and personality wellbeing (work on emotional component of wellbeing).
3. Emotional and personality wellbeing (work on personality wellbeing component).
4. Emotional and personality ill-being (work on negative factors of emotional and personality wellbeing).
5. EPW management (at carrying out rescue and other emergency operations).

TABLE 1: Characteristics of 4 groups identified by SEPW Index ($n = 2229$).

SEPW type	A + B - C		
	Min	Max	M
High level of SEPW index (HL) – high SEPW	27.00	39.00	30.89
Increased Level of SEPW index (IL) – increased SEPW	19.00	26.00	22.92
Decreased level of SEPW index (DL) – Decreased SEPW	11.00	18.00	15.11
Low level of SEPW index (LL) – low SEPW	-9.00	10.00	6.79

3. Results

According to the results of SEPW 4 groups of the testees were singled out: with high, increased, decreased and low SEPW index (Table 1).

On the basis of the data obtained with the help of SEPW technique the form (individual or group) of psychological support and rationale for the respondents' involvement into the training group were defined. Special attention was paid to the respondents with decreased and low levels of SEPW index.

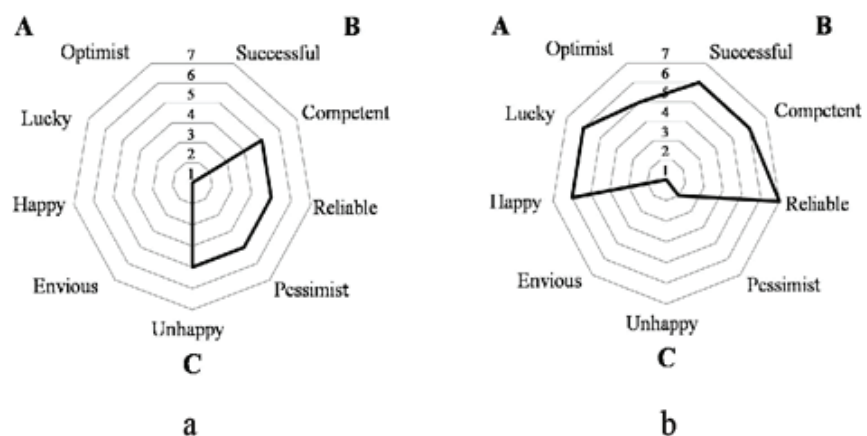


Figure 1: The respondents individual profiles with low (a) and high (b) SEPW index.

To assess the training effectiveness SEPW reevaluation was carried out. Changes in items scores are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that after the training all the indicators of SEPW changed: positive parameters became significantly higher, negative – significantly low, and difference between mean values of EPW integrated indicators decreased ($A - B$); there was a significant rise in value of emotional wellbeing indicator (A), overall indicator of EPW ($A + B$) and SEPW index ($A + B - C$).

TABLE 2: Validity of differences (the Wilcoxon criterion) of SEPW mean values before and after training ($n = 55$).

SEPW items	Before training	After training	P
Happy	4.76	5.80	0.000
Lucky	4.60	5.20	0.000
Optimist	5.25	5.87	0.000
Successful	4.05	4.64	0.000
Competent	5.75	5.95	0.001
Reliable	5.56	6.07	0.000
Pessimist	3.00	2.13	0.000
Unhappy	2.22	1.36	0.000
Envious	1.35	1.22	0.008
A	14.62	16.87	0.000
B	15.36	16.65	0.000
A – B	-0.75	0.22	0.000
A + B	29.98	33.53	0.000
C	6.56	4.71	0.000
A + B – C	23.42	28.82	0.000

TABLE 3: The number of the respondents with different SEPW index level before and after the training.

Index Level	Before training		After training		φ^*
	N	%	N	%	
High	13	23.63 %	44	80.00%	6.29**
Increased	34	61.82%	10	18.18%	4.87**
Decreased	7	12.73%	1	1.82%	2.41*
Low	1	1.82%	0	0%	0.74

In addition, the number of rescuers with high level of SEPW index grew sharply, and the numbers of respondents with increased and decreased levels of SEPW index went down significantly. The rescuers with low SEPW index joined the group with decreased level (Table 3).

Besides SEPW technique Resilience Test was re-administered to the respondents (Table 4).

As Table 4 shows compared to testing before the training mean value of the item 'involvement' increased significantly and approached to norm value. The scales 'control' and 'risk acceptance' did not only grew, they exceeded norm' value and the results of 'risk acceptance' scale were beyond the norm range. Mean value of integrated indicator 'resilience' increased significantly and was not only within the norm range but near its upper limit.

TABLE 4: Validity of differences according to resilience test scales before and after training (the Wilcoxon criterion).

	M (before training)	M (after training)	p	Norms	Standard Deviation
Involvement	28.55	36.55	0.00	37.64	8.08
Control	27.31	34.76	0.00	29.17	8.43
Risk acceptance	16.98	22.75	0.00	13.91	4.39
Resilience	72.84	94.05	0.00	80.72	18.53

Free oral and written utterances of the respondents also confirmed the training effectiveness, which makes it possible to conclude that rescuers' EPW has been optimized.

4. Discussion

The results obtained demonstrate that the majority of the respondents exhibit the increase in the level of EPW self-examination.

The training brought about the greatest changes in the groups of the respondents with decreased and low SEPW level. The level of self-acceptance, resilience, involvement and problem awareness also grew; their vision and environment assessment changed. This change can be associated with a more expressed feeling of 'authorship', subjectivity as an opportunity to take the lead strengthening the individual and allowing him to find internal values and resources. The given empirical fact can be also explained by the form of group training which has altered the system of external representations of the subjects resulting in enriched self-knowledge.

Thanks to the training data it is possible to suppose modified implicit perceptions of the respondents' own wellbeing: a new dimension for evaluating personal states and limitations was added, there occurred self-reevaluation, and the exploration of a new lifestyle started.

It is worth mentioning that the part of the respondents did not demonstrate significant changes, which can possibly be connected with their unwillingness to modify their life and perceptions, with existing internal antagonism and inability to overcome it. 'The existing behavior patterns, ways of response, given their irrationality appear to be less painful than their abandonment, acceptance of a new "self-image" and mastering a new lifestyle' ([10], p. 175). Any change according to the B. D. El'konin's concept also requires reflection, the opportunity to remove from immediate life routine; hence, it

stirs up a pushback. There occurred a clash between the played-out style of interaction with the world and the new one offered during the group work, which caused mortification of the old, destruction of categorization as a cognition mechanism.

5. Conclusions

Thus, the training delivery confirmed the opportunity to optimize self-evaluation of the rescuers' emotional and personality wellbeing by means of increased awareness of assessing their own EPW and a wider repertoire of techniques providing normalization of actual psycho-emotional state.

The training conducted showed the significance of a number of socio-psychological areas for optimizing EPW, namely:

1. alteration of the respondents perceptions about their wellbeing;
2. personality awareness of individual adaptive resources;
3. increased trust in yourself as the subject of providing your own resilience;
4. decreased anxiety and alert personality passivity when expecting and perceiving threats, strengthening the role of self-regulation' value, self-sufficiency, sense of purpose.

It should be noted that the training designed can be exploited in any vocational group with the account of specific character of its members' activities. The results obtained testify to the fact that this training for optimizing EPW can be considered important for preventing negative tendencies in the society.

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